THE RELIGIOUS BELIEF OF ANCIENT MANIPUR

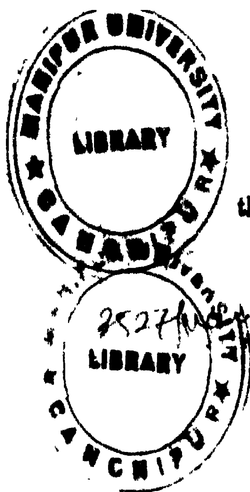
W. YUMJAO SINGH

The Religious Belief of Ancient Manipur

By

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A word from the publishers.

The author passed away rather prematurely on the 3rd of October, 1953 after a prolonged illness. He was a self-made man and faced many an obstacle in his life since his childhood. He over came there all and came to be recognised and regarded as one of the foremost of his time. He had many friends among the British officers who held him in great esteem. He was truly a man of plain living and high thinking. He devoted his life in research and study of antiquity and his service to the cause of Manipur in this respect is unique and unrivalled. He studied antiquity in the scientific way. His contribution and lead towards the study of antiquity needs no mention here. His "Report on the Archaeological studies" in Manipur published in the year 1935 is a guiding light to the students of ancient history of Manipur of the present generation. In his time he was a man knowing a lot and doing queer things. By and by it has been realised what was the volume of work he did for the unearthing of Manipur. The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad in recognition of his invaluable services conferred the title of Gavesana Shiromani on the author in 1964. To us the publishers he was a vocabulary in himself. He always had a ready solution to any of our problems. The author's sphere of life was very wide and varied. His love for Manipur and its antiquity was so high that he tried to revive the

manufacture of hand made paper and could produce paper of quality by using hand crushed bamboo pulp. He used to visit the creek and corner of Manipur and to collect even metal ores for experimental melting. Such was his activity and intensity of love for Manipur. He was a profound devotee. His temple and God was all that he cared for in his spiritual life. But the author could not see his important works published in his life time and due to unavoidable circumstances the publishers too could not bring them out, earlier posthumously, either. This is certainly a reflexion on us and we fully take the responsibily for the inability on our part to act up according to his desire. Another book of the author too under the title of "An Early History of Manipur" is in press It is expected that this too will see light at no distant date. It will be followed by other books like Manipur in the Mahabharata, General Remarks on the Manipuri Language, Monograph on Archaic Manipuri containing several valuable plates etc. one by one. We only hope that the reading public will excuse us for having left these books unpublished for such a long time.

Publishers,

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THE RELIGIOUS BELIEF OF ANCIENT MANIPUR

CHAPTER I

Researches on Vishnu

THE people are the worshippers of Vishnu who is one of the most ancient deities of the Indian Aryans and whose place in the religious belief of modern India is most conspicuous; of the Hindu triad he is the sustainer. Indra, Varuna and many other deities of the Rgvedic literature have lost their hold upon the mind of the people, while Vishnu is as fresh as ever or perhaps much fresher and more prominent with the additions and graftings of traditions and legendary accounts for several thousands of years. Brahma and Maheshwara, the rest of the Hindu triad are, according to many of the Hindu accounts, his creator and destroyer i. e. according to his will they are carrying on the work of creation and destruction.

Thus it will be noticed that from the Rgvedic time or perhaps prior to that down to the modern age he continues to occupy one of the most important places in the religious belief of the Indian people. But what is the origin of such an important deity ? The Rgvedic commentators of all ages have

given various identifications but none of them are free from controversies and it may be interesting to say that ancient Manipuri tradition too indirectly seeks to interfere with the identification of this important deity of the Hindus and it is here proposed to put forward this interpretation as concisely as possible quoting Rgvedic and other authorities in support.

Now the Indian equivalent for the word deity is deva which is derived from the root div to shine, thus anything shining was a deva or god, in fact most of the devas of the Rgvedic literature were wonders of nature i. e. they were generally identical both in name and nature to the sun, the moon, the sky, the stars or constellations of stars, the dawn, the wind, the water, the fire and so on. It is quite natural that the idea of a god must have been conceived in this way inasmuch as abstract ideas cannot be formed in the earliest stage of human civilization, as they were only the result of a long and slow process of assimilation and generalization of concrete ones. There is no wonder therefore that in most of the commentaries of the Rgveda attempt has been made to identify the gods mentioned therein with some natural phenomena or wonders of nature. This is evidently the cause of so many different opinions on the identification of Vishnu.

From a general perusal of the hymns on Vishnu such as the verses in 1-22-16 et seq. it may

be noticed that most of the accounts were based on tradition or belief previously existing among the people, in fact a restoration of these long forgotten tradition is one of the most important subjects that must attract the attention not only of the vedic scholars but the Indologists as well, because it will reveal many of the social customs and manners of the pre-Rgvedic people of this ancient land of ours. But as a consequence of the long span of time that has intervened between then and now, it is rather inaccessible to us and almost all the possible scientific method of restoring the past history of any people succumbs to it, the only possible road open to us for some sort of investigation is the old method of ancient Indian Etymologists. It is now an established fact that language alone can establish many a historical fact, since "it is the reflection of the thoughts and beliefs of the communities from their earliest days and by tracing its changes and its fortunes, by discovering the origin and history of words and their meanings we can read their thoughts and beliefs with greater certainty and minuteness than had they been traced by the pen of historians." It is therefore proposed here to have recourse to this old method taking advantage of freely utilizing traditions prevailing among one of the ancient peoples in one of corners of the Indian frontier. By the remotest corner of India the modern

Manipur State is meant, which comprises a central valley completely surrounded by several ranges of hills requiring several days tedious journey to cross them and thus almost shut up from the rest of the world, till very recently, there is no wonder therefore if any thought or belief once made its way into it, it would continue for a long time without any restraint or reform. At the same time it is not an easy matter to change the religious belief of such a people if it has once established its hold upon them, it is for this reason only that Buddhism could not bring Manipur under its domain, though history would reveal that "in the days when the Indian branch of the Aryan race was still in its progressive and colonizing stage this district (Manipur) was repeatedly passed over by wave after another of invaders intent on penetrating into the remotest part of Burma". And in olden days Aryan civilization made its way into Burma and China through Manipur. Thus there is every possibility of getting a first hand information from this people if such traditions and beliefs were of an Indian Aryan origin. In order to convince the reader of the genuineness of the source of the traditions it is my duty to discuss something of the history of the land bearing on the point but in order to be short and thus save the time of the reader let me quote here one or two authorities only.

"According to Burmese Royal Chronicles," says

Col. Gerini, "Dhajaraja a king of the Sakya race, settled at Manipura, about 550 B. C. and later on conquered Tagaung old or Upper Pagan."

It may not be out of place to make some notes on the possibility of some Kshatriya princes having established themselves in Manipur in those early days. For this purpose let me quote the carefully thought out conclusions of Sir A. Phayre, "At first sight it appears improbable that any of the royal Kshatriya tribes of Northern India, should at the early period indicated have left their homes and penetrated through the wild country of eastern Bengal to Upper Irawadi. This, however, is what the Burmese chronicles, repeating an ancient tradition, assert, though no adequate cause for the movement is assigned. It would have appeared more probable had the migration referred to the time when the Buddhists were being overwhelmed in Upper India by the revival of Brahmanical influence. But there is no trace in Burmese traditions of that revolution. The cause assigned in the Burmese Maha Rajaweng for the first migration of the Sakya tribe, is the supposed conquest of the race in Kapilavastu by the king of Kosala, before the advent of Goodama".

If we ponder over the political history of Northern India of this period we shall be convinced that there was no absurdity of one of the princes of the Sakya dynasty having migrated into

Manipur and settled there as the Maharajvamsa asserts. "In or about the sixth century B C. we find," says the Groundwork of Indian History, "sixteen great states besides a number of smaller principalities flourished in the extensive region between the Hindukush and the Godavari." A rivalry naturally arose among these states 'each of which sought to establish its authority over the neighbouring states, with the consequence that Kosala was the first to rise to power and it extended its frontiers in all directions, annexed Kasi and brought the Sakya state of Kapilavastu in the Nepalese tarai into subjection'. This account synchronizes with the time assigned in the Maharajvamsa as has already been noticed and it is quite possible that either the vanquished prince or one of his relatives who preferred to be banished voluntarily rather than vanquished might have migrated into this remotest corner where there was no possibility of their being molested any further by the conquering state.

Col. Gerini again in his Researches on Ptolemy's Geography of Eastern Asia writes, "Since the Kalingas and Andhras appear to have been, in the third century B. C., masters of the valley of the Ganges from the frontier of Magadha to the sea, it is easy to conceive on the one part that the Kalingas could penetrate into Western Burma through Silhet, Manipur and the Kubo Valley...

...and that the Andhras in their turn could easily advance along the east coast line as far as the Naf or the Kuladon. Admitted that a dominion of the Kalingas as described above did actually exist, it did not last long. As soon as their power waved and they were driven away by later intruders towards the south of India, an event which according to Sir W. Elliot happened about a century before the Christian Era, their Empire was broken up and only its ruins remain to attest its past existence hence in Ptolemy's time we should search in vain for such a dominion. We only find three capital cities—evidently the seats of government as many separate kingdoms or districts—recorded in that region viz. Tugma, Triglipton and Mareura.

The former is probably Tummu in the Chindwin Valley or some other place between it and the Surma river in Silhet; hence it represents the chief city of the district of Kachar or Manipur.

After the fall of the Dravidian power in the above three districts Manipur continued to be under the Brahmanic rule."

In Jaimini's Ashvamedha or the Horse Sacrifice, the people of Manipur are said to have been much devoted to Vishnu, thus there is no doubt that even at a time when the whole of India was under the influence of Buddhism this little State which was the scene of so many Indian priests and Buddhist monks passing through into the remotest

part of Burma was still a Brahmanic kingdom and the people were the worshippers of Vishnu. In addition to this there is internal evidence in the Manipuri social institutions that would prove their early relationship with the Indian Aryans. Let me cite here only one instance which would illucidate to know one of the Rgvedic gods. In the Manipuri vocabulary the word Soraren a phonetic decay of the Sanskrit word Surendra which is dialectically contracted into Suren in many of the Indian vernaculars signifies both Indra and the blue sky, therefore without much labour and research it may be asserted that the Rgvedic Indra was nothing but the blue sky. All the Manipuri traditions regarding this Soraren are identical to those of Indra, thunderbolt is his arm, he is the rain giver, still the blue sky as has been said is also their Soraren. It is a matter of regret that at least one of the writers on Manipuri has passed his remarks on the subject as, "Indra, the Sky God, has his counterpart in the Meithei system, where the deity Sorarel possesses all the attributes generally assigned to Indra, with whom he is now identified by the ingenuous Hindus." It must be said here that the identification is a matter of fact and a scientific one too and to attribute it to the ingenuity of the identifiers (of course no one knows who identified it) is nothing but injustice to the cause of science. Thus from a comparative study of the Rgvedic

account on the Manipuri tradition we come to the conclusion that Rgvedic God Indra was the personification of the blue sky.

Indra is not the only Vedic god that has found his way in the religious belief of the people. Savita the sun god and Soma the moon god had their counterparts in this religious system, under the disguised forms of Sanamahi and Pakhangba. But Guru Shidaba or Atiya Shidaba i. e. the Immortal preceptor or the Immortal Aditya was supreme God, who sustains this world say the whole universe. In the above pages we have read that the people of this country are Brahmanical and worshippers of Vishnu. It is here proposed to discuss whether the old cult of the Manipuris was a worship of Vishnu or was it only a form of animistic as some of our modern historians suppose.

In the preface of Durga Das Lahiri's translation of the Rgveda on 1st Mandal on 4th Anuvak 15th Sookta we see some opinion about the eternal time and his quotation of the Sootra is given below.

অনাদিনিধনঃ কালো রুদ্রঃ সঙ্কর্ষণঃ স্মৃতঃ ।
কলনাৎ সর্ব্বভূতানাং স কালঃ পরিকীর্ত্তিতঃ ॥

Thus Soma the time measurer in time has become the destructive power of the universe. P. 795.

Now if the Manipuris were the worshippers of Vishnu, under what name was he worshipped ?—The ancient Manipuris or at least one of their sections were the worshippers of Guru Shidaba, the Immortal Guru, he is said to have had two sons or assistants, by the will of the Immortal Father the whole universe was created and at his will it is being maintained Of these two assistants one creates and the other destroys it, thus it will be seen that the father and the sons as mentioned in this account are nothing but the Preserver, the Creator and the Destroyer of the Hindu triad, it therefore follows that the Immortal Guru of the Manipuris was identical to Vishnu, moreover it is needless to say that according to the Visnusahasranama Guru is another name of Vishnu thus it is quite evident that both Vishnu and Guru Shidaba are identical in name as well as in action. In the Manipuri mythology too gods are the wonders of nature, thus the creator may easily be identified with the sun and the destroyer with the moon, just as Brahma and Maheshwara of the Hindu mythology. There is no wonder that people would regard the sun as their creator if we only remember that he is the source of all life and his action and influence on the vegetable kingdom. The moon is the measure of time which alone destroys everything in this creation. It is quite natural that until people could definitely form the idea of the destructiveness of the moon i. e. time they should

regard him as a source of nector, for this reason in the ninth book of the Rgveda though Soma is addressed as the measure of time (vide ix-86-41 and 45) he was only the destroyer of enemies (ix-61-30) thus showing a dim idea of his killing propensities. In fact in the vedic literature he is the source of or a jar of nector which is being filled up and poured out for the gods and men. If we think of the phases of the moon and its brilliancy there is no wonder that such an idea of a jar of nector must have necessarily been formed by a people in the infancy of their civilization. In later days he is, an admixture of these two ideas Mahadeva is the destroyer in the Hindu mythology and at the same time he is the lord of medicines. If the two assistants of the Immortal Guru were the sun and the moon what was the wonder of nature that was worshipped by the ancient people as Vishnu or Guru? —With all my deep and profound respect for all the Rgvedic commentators both ancient and modern I propose here to advance some other identification that may materially differ from their findings and I must confess that I am doing this with the full consciousness that it is too daring and impertinent on my part but the excuse that may be put in my favour is that it is being dealt with a motive of putting forward the traditions and beliefs of a people who are entirely secluded from other parts of India and hence these cannot or could not

easily be affected as may be expected in the mainland.

In the Manipuri version the Immortal Guru is said to be seated on a three legged seat which is the source of this world.

Another name given to him is Atya Shidaba or the Immortal Atya or Aditi for the present.

He is symbolized with a peculiarly shaped Indian mystic symbol of Om, having the figure seven for its main body and sometimes with numerous dots round the figure but never above the nadbindu. Any old Manipuri manuscript begins with this symbol sometimes with the dots and sometimes without them.

It must be noted here that in the archaic Manipuri literature the word Guru means something more than a spiritual guide, as it means an acharyya or rishi i. e, a sage. Thus any personality with the knowledge and ability of ancient sages was their Guru thus Brihaspati was their Shagonshen Guru or the sage who was the fond keeper of horses and Shukracharyya was their Irai Guru or the sage who was the presiding deity of blood or water. In fact many of the wise kings and courtiers were Gurus. But of all these the wisest of the wise is their Immortal Guru, the Supreme Being and the rest are the mortal gurus.

We have referred to the tripod seat of Guru Shidaba, has such a seat ever played its part in the Vedic literature if so who was the god that occupied the seat ?—has he anything to do with the immortal Aditya of the Manipuris ?



CHAPTER II

A God with a Three Legged Seat

In the Rgveda the Aswins or the twins are said to have a chariot of three wheels and triangular in shape. Thus they are the only deities that have a similarity with the Immortal Guru in respect of their seats or conveyance. But who are the Twins of the Rgveda? The Nirukta says, "According to some they are heaven and earth; day and night according to others. Some take them to be the sun and the moon, (while) the historians regard them as two virtuous kings". It further says, "One is called the son of night, the other son of dawn."* In the Rgveda the sun is the son of dawn. It therefore follows that of the Aswins one is the sun and for the other we must look for something that has the same attributes with the only difference that it is the son of night i. e. appearing at night fall. In the Rgveda Brhatbhanu or the greater sun is another name of Agni (vide I-36-15), again in X-88-18 we read that at nightfall Agni is on the top of all the worlde and then in the morning he rises as the sun. Thus Agni is a nocturnal deity and solar in nature or attributes. In at least two of the

*Lakshman Sarup's Nirukta.

books of the Rgveda I-30-19 and VII-21-4 it is said that one of the wheels of the car of the Twins is in the topmost firmament which is also the place of Agni as well vide I-59-2. Thus it may be inferred that the sun and Agni are the two deities that represent the twin of the Rgveda. But here also another question arises, who is Agni? We know the meaning of Agni is fire, but from the above it has been seen that Agni is something more than the fire so well known to us. In fact in the Rgveda Agni is one of the most peculiar deities and the attributes that are commonly mentioned of it are quite different from those of our terrestrial fire, these may be summed up as follows :—

(1) He is Jataveda or one who knows his birth or that of everything born.

(2) He is the lord of the house. I-12-6.

(3) He is Vaishwanara or the divine spirit of the universe.

(4) He is the head or is in the topmost of the heaven. I-59 2.

(5) He is the nave of this world and holds all the rest of the worlds. I-59-2 and V-8-4.

From the above it will be seen that Agni is something more then our fire. It is therefore necessary to find out what was the wonder of nature that was known to the Ancient Aryans as Agni from which our fire was obtained or at least supposed to

have been obtained and on account of its popularity the latter name has been absolutely applied to it and on account of the disuse of the former for a long time it has been almost forgotten leaving only a few traces of it here and there, in the history of words in a language such instances are not very rare, in short there must have been a wonder of nature that was known as Agni before the people knew the use of fire and when they first discovered its use it was thought that it was evolved from it and was consequently named after it.

Let us now consider the above one by one, (1). In the Rgveda Agni is often addressed as Jataveda, one who knows the birth of all again in VIII-39 6 it is said that Agni knows the birth of all devas or deities, if he knows the birth of these, he must have been born before the birth of them all, therefore his birth must be regarded to have been known to him only and to none. No other else is Jataveda who knows everything born in this world, thus he is nothing but the unknown and unknowable whom we call the Supreme Being.

(2) In the Rgveda Agni is known as Hota i. e. the performer of the sacrifice in other words the lord of the creation as the word Yajna or sacrifice has often been identified with creation. The appellation of Vaishwanara implies lord of the universe and thus needs very little comment.

(3) He is often known as the lord of the house, if we consider the whole universe as a house in which all the devas were the members of the family then he must be as the head of the family i. e. he is the overlord. Because according to the old Hindu or at least the ancient Manipuri idea their house is a universe in miniature, before proceeding any further let us attempt to know what is the origin of fire according to the Rgvedic accounts. It has already been said that Agni is fire i. e. in the Rgvedic vocabulary Agni means both the Supreme God and fire itself. In the Rgveda Agni is said to have been obtained by the people of the Bhrgu clan, that is it was first discovered by them. Here it may be worth our while to try to understand the origin of fire and how the name Agni was applied to it. We are talking about a topic which must have happened several thousands of years ago, when people did not know the use of fire and thus they must have been in such a low stage of civilization that they had to eat everything raw on account of their ignorance of kindling fire. It is indeed very interesting to note that in the Rgvedic literature things that may be ranged from such a low stage of human civilization down to the knowledge of the laws of gravitation and centrifugal force or the like may be found, if any one ponders over such things he must be proud of himself at the idea that the ancestors

of the land in which he is born were very keen to keep various things in record and occupied one of the highest places, in their intellectual attainments. However, in I-79-2 of the Rgveda we find a description of how Agni as a flash of light accompanied by Marutas or wind dispels rainclouds. In fact the first three verses of the hymn remind one of the lightning under the name of Agni, who is an expert rain giver and his flashing among the rain clouds is more or less his activity to send forth the rain. In these and some other verses such as VII-3-6 that may be regarded as having some reference to lightning, no special name of it is given but the general appellation of Agni is applied to it although from the context it would be quite clear that lightning is meant to the exclusion of the terrestrial fire, it therefore follows that lightning was Synonymous to Agni. People must have noticed for days and years this flash of light descending sometimes as far as this world of ours, which sooner or later returned to its own place i. e. extinguished in due course. Thus of all the devas or shining ones Agni was the only individual that would visit this world in person he was therefore the only messenger between the devas and the devotees thus he was the Doota or Messenger. This act of Agni's coming down and returning again must have been observed by some one of the Bhrgu clan vide I-58 6 and Trita, the son of Vibhubasa who collected and

preserved it X-46-3, perhaps with much care, pomp and sanctity with the firm belief that he had obtained God Himself. As a matter of fact they must have offered to him whatever was good and palatable and no new name for this new find of Trita was invented but was called by the old name of Agni, as time went on offerings to other gods, as well, were made through him who as they believed would carry them to those respective gods on his return to heaven. He must have been named Vanhi by this time, as the derivative meaning of vanhi is one who carries and it is another name of fire. Thus it will be seen that the origin of fire was from heaven that descended in the shape of lightning and the name Agni was much older than the introduction of fire among the people but what was the natural phenomena or wonder of nature that was known to the ancients as fire which in the vocabulary that has been bequeathed to us is known as fire? This Agni or fire which was regarded as God himself was the lord of the house. An old Manipuri custom may be cited here in order to illustrate it. In almost all the typical Manipuri houses, just about the centre of it a special place is assigned for preserving fire where an iron tripod is placed. To them the place is Phunga to which the more orthodox sect of the people daily offer whatever they have to eat. At the time of a formal entry of any newly built house they have to take in this fire

which they must preserve continually at least for five consecutive days for the occasion.

In III-7-1 we read that Agni holds everything, in I-59-1 we find that Vaishwanara Agni is the nave of all the worlds and he holds all the creation like a strongly posted pillar, as the nave is to the spokes so is Agni to the devas or the shining ones V-13.6. Again in I-59-2 he is in the head of heaven i. e. he is in the topmost part of the heaven in other words he is the highest of all. In I-143-2 and VII-5-7 it is said that Agni is born in Paramavyoma, that is the highest part of heaven. But the expression of the highest part of heaven is rather ambiguous and we must try to understand what is this Paramavyoma, in IX-70-1 we read that in order to maintain the other four worlds which have been created and thriven by Truth. Soma is milking three and seven cows in Paramavyoma on whose head there is Truth. Thus this Paramavyoma is beyond the seven worlds that is it is beyond the Ursa Major, and the highest of all the lokas or the worlds commencing from this world of ours. In order to understand the above let us first of all try to understand what it is meant by the expression the other four worlds, if we remember that the subject of the verse is Soma or the moon it will be evident that of the seven worlds four are left out in as much as if Soma or the moon that is the Janah Loka is milking three and seven cows or the Three stars of the Polaris in

the centre of which the Pole star appears and the Seven stars of the Ursa Major above the head of which there is the Dhruva tara or the Pole star or the Truth as it is called thus we get the three worlds and four are left. This milking of the three and seven cows or shining bodies on whose head there is the Perpetual one by Soma or the moon is the filling up of the moon with nectre which is again poured out in order to maintain the other four worlds, and in this connection it must be noted that according to the Hindu astronomy the moon is higher than the sun. Thus by the expression the other four worlds we are to understand the rest of the seven worlds or Bhub, Bhuvah, Swah and Mahah i. e. this world, the space, the sky and the solar world. It is therefore quite clear that Agni's place i. e. Paramavyoma is the concave vault of the top-most firmament which is beyond the Ursa Major. Again in X-82-2 we read that the place of Vishwa-krma or the Supreme Being is also beyond the Ursa Major where he resides alone and creates and holds all. In the nave of this birthless Person the whole universe was placed X-82-6 just as Agni is the nave of all the worlds I-59-1. Moreover in I-36-13 we read that Agni holds us just as Savita does, the meaning of this is that as we belong to the solar system Savita or the sun is holding us but as Agni is holding the whole universe and as we belong to the universe as well he is holding us too. It therefore

follows that the work of Agni is the same as that of the Supreme Being. In the Rgveda the Supreme Being is also known by such other names as Purusa the person, Hiranyagarbha, Prajapati, Paramatma and so on, they are also holding the universe more or less in the same way, but that of Purusa or the Person is a bit conspicuous and it would therefore be interesting to make some remarks on him. He is said to have four feet (not four but rather three), one of which is in this world and the other three are in Divloka or in heaven, with these feet he is moving the whole universe along with all the animate and inanimate things, this movement of the Purusa or Person is repeated in Vishnu's movement with his three feet. But what are the three heavenly feet of the Person, which are contemplated in the tripod seat of the Immortal Guru, the three wheeled triangular seat of Aditi and so on and further more the three feet of Vishnu, they are indicated by Uttanapada i. e. feet turned upwards.

In X 72-3 and the subsequent verse there is a mention of this turned feet, where it is said that Brahmanaspati or the lord of the universe first created something from nothing, afterwards the directions and then Uttanapada or the feet turned upwards, the earth was born of this Uttanapada, the directions were born of the space and Daksa was born of Aditi again Aditi was born of Daksa. Thus it is apparently a created thing and

consequently it must be some natural phenomena. The word naturally reminds us of the Pouranic account of Uttanapada, Dhruva's father. In the Manipuri account of Atya Guru Shidaba or simply Atya Shidaba is another name of Guru Shidaba or the Immortal Guru.

Now the word Atya is a confused form of the word Aditi or Aditya in the meaning of Aditi and it signifies the endless expanse in the modern Manipuri vernacular. But according to Roth Aditi is eternity or the eternal which sustains, and is sustained by the Adityas. This meaning seems rather applicable to this Atya as it is an attribute of the Immortal Guru, but what is this Aditi? Even in the Rgvedic literature the meaning of Aditi seems rather confusing, in the Nighantu we find, "Aditi is heaven, Aditi is atmosphere, Aditi is mother, father and son. Aditi is all the god and the five tribes; Aditi what is born and what shall be born."* Thus Aditi is one of the most confusing deities. In Sanskrit it is in the feminine gender, while in the Manipuri vernaoular it is in the masculine gender, but accoring to Prof. Max Mollar it is an ancient god or goddess, therefore there is no doubt that according to him it may be both a male or female deity, if it is a personified deity we have had a cursory idea of it since in X 72-4 Daksa is born of Aditi and Aditi was again born of Daksa i. e. Aditi was the mother of Daksa and Daksa was

the father of Aditi. It is a very peculiar puzzle because the same Aditi is both the mother and the daughter of Daksa. Again in I-164-33 we read that the father is making his daughter pregnant. The only solution of this is that as both Aditi the eternal and Daksa the etherial sky are such things that any of them cannot be regarded to have been born prior to the other from this similarity of their attributes it appears to me that the reason of the confusion of the meaning of Aditi is to be accounted for, but who is the eternal ? In I-72-9 we find that Aditi sustains the whole universe, again Aditi is the head or on the top of every other thing VIII-67-13. Thus practically Aditi has got all the attributes of Agni, in fact in II-1-11 we read that Agni is Aditi.

This Agni is the Bharga of the famous Gayatri of the Brahmins, we have already noticed that the Manipuri word Phunga in which the household fire is preserved is a phonetic decay of the word Bharga, which is derived from the root, bhrasj to parch, a characteristic of fire. In the recitation of the Gayatri Sapta vyahriti or the seven expansions have to be recited i. e. after repeating the seven worlds the Gayatri is to be uttered, it means that the place of Bharga is beyond the world of Truth i. e. beyond the Ursa Major which as we have already seen is the place of Agni, and to identify Bharga with the sun or the sun god is only to contract the scope of Bharga and to bring it down

to the solar system only, as the sun is to the whole solar system so is Agni to the whole universe in other words as the sun is holding the solar system so is Agni holding the whole universe including the sun itself and thus the solar system, therefore the sun or the sun god is nothing but an Agni in miniature to those of the solar system, thus there is no wonder that in many of the versions of the Gayatri the sun should be explained as being addressed to, yet Bharga is the god of the sun god as well. We have already noticed that Aditi is Agni, in X-72-8 & 9 we notice that this Aditi or Agni had eight sons he or she placed seven of them near by but placed the eighth son or the sun at a distance in order to create and destroy (us). This would clearly show that the sun god is not Bharga but it is only a representative of the latter, the Brihadbhanu or the greater sun i. e. Agni. The whole truth of the creation is that as the gastic fire is to the body so is Vaishanara Agni to the whole creation. In fact it is this Agni which maintains this universe holds it in motion that it keeps every thing in its proper order if you take out this Centre of gravity you displace the whole creation. And this Agni is on the head of the three and seven milch cows as Satya or Truth, as the three and seven cows are the three and seven stars of the Ursa Minor and the Ursa Major and these cows

are as if being milked by the moon, thus it will be seen that this Vaishanara Agni is nothing but Satya or truth i. e. Dhruva the Pole star.

This Satya or Truth if we can establish the identity of it with some wonder of nature that would fulfil all the properties of this true one, we shall know there and then only the wonder of nature which was called by the ancients by the name of Agni life thus discovered fire.

In I-164-2 of the Rgveda we read of a Car of Vishpati—It has got one wheel and three naves where all the Universe rests i. e. as Agni holds the Universe so the Car holds it. Again according to the 11th verse of the same it is the Car or Rta or Truth whom the verse addresses as Agne the vocative case of Agni. It therefore follows that Rta or Truth is Agni. This wheel or Car is conjointly pulled by ten turned upwards. Vide I-164 14. This ten turned upwards convey the same idea of the three and seven cows of Truth referred to above. In I-12-5 we find that Vishpati, Lord of men is another name of Agni. Wilson has translated this word as, Prajah, progeny, people, men.

Again in I-146-1. This Agni is on the top with three and seven rashmis or shining ones and is said to be seated on the lap of its father. This has been the origin of the Puranic account of Dhruva on the lap of his father Uttanapada, as we shall

see later on. The three feet of Vamana' who deceived Bali with his three feet are nothing but an example of the great action of three feet of Vishnu. These three and seven turned upwards with Visha on it is symbolised as Om.



CHAPTER III

Origin of the Symbol of Om.

It has already been said that the Immortal Guru is represented by a symbol locally known as Anji. If it is stripped off all the local peculiarities which may speak lots of things to the inquisitive mind, is nothing but a second edition of the Indian symbol of Om that represents the Supreme Being or a combination of the Hindu triad Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara. This was perhaps one of the oldest symbols of the Indian Aryans as it is to be uttered before the recitation of the Vedic hymns. But how does it represent God ? In the first stage of human civilization, as it has already been said, man cannot form any abstract idea, every symbol that represents such an idea must necessarily be the outcome of some concrete idea i. e. it was invented to represent something tangible though the modern man who uses it might have forgotten the origin of it, nay they might have lost sight of the concrete side which represents it but only remember the abstract idea it now signifies. This remark applies to even the individual letters of an original script, because they were at first pictures drawn to represent concrete objects, i. e. at first every original script was only a picture writing according to help the

memory of the people who used it and in course of time according to the mentality of the people who used it, it either remains the same picture writing or becomes phonetic writing or sound writing that is to say every letter either stands for the same thing it represents or a sound that may suitably be represented by such a picture, in the latter case the possessors of such a script usually lose sight of the origin of the symbols and mostly remain content for all practical purposes if they know the sound each letter represents. But to restore such lost ideas is of great use at least to these antiquarians in order to understand the gradual development of the mental faculties of such a people who first invented there. Before proceeding any further with the mystic symbol of Om I think it may be interesting to attempt to trace the origin of some of the letters of the Bengali script by way of illustration. In choosing this script for the illustration it must be stated that it is not that I am more perfectly acquitted with it but I have also grounds to say that it is the natural development of one of the most ancient and scientific system of Indian alphabets. If the Arabic figures were at all borrowed from India it was the Bengali figure that made its way into Arabia and then into Europe, no one, who takes the trouble of comparing the corresponding figures of the two scripts giving sufficient allowance for wear and tear

as well as additions and alterations in writing for such a long time, can deny the fact. The Bengali letter ka is the gradual development of the picture of a Kalasa or water jar. In manuscripts of an earlier period as may be found in Manipur the letter cha was not so well shaped as it may now be noticed in printing, but was of a roundish nature. In fact in our childhood when we used to learn the alphabet our old tutors used to assign some epithets to many of the letters in order to help the memory of the learner and such an epithet for this letter was ring shaped that is having the shape of a ring. Thus if it was a ring in Manipur in my childhood there can be no reasonable wonder if it is said that this letter was originally, a picture representing a chakra or wheel, while chha was the picture of a chhatra or umbrella with its tail for its handle and jha was that of a jhari or water pot with a spout. In the same way da was the picture of danta or the teeth, pa was the picture of a patra or leaf with a twig, pha was that of a phala or phula is a fruit or flower and ma that of a mukha or the human face while ha was that of a hand with the fingers a bit bent and turned up at the wrist. The Bengali figure one represents the waxing moon, two the hand as in the case of ha while three the three stars of the Polaris in the centre of which the Pole star is seen, seven the Ursa Major and zero the sky. It therefore follows that

this symbol of Om which represents the Supreme Being must have originally been a picture representing something concrete that was regarded by the ancient Indian Aryans having the attributes of the Supreme Being. What was this something concrete if it can be solved here we shall come to the more concrete side of the problem and thus trace the wonder of nature that was called by the ancient Aryans Agni, Vishnu or the Immortal Guru and so on.

It must be borne in mind that the figure or shape of the symbol is almost the same in Hindi, Bengali or Manipuri with the only difference that the Bengali one is very terse and concise, the Hindi one contains an extra stroke, while the Manipuri one as has been said sometimes contains numerous dots but never above the nad-bindu. These prominent differences in particular details for the same object and symbol in different localities would lead one to conclude that it was the development of the same idea and symbol in those different localities. In fact these microscopic differences are of great importance to those who waste their time and energy in tracing the origin of such and other similar things and feel an ecstacy of joy if they can by chance flatter themselves to have obtained some sort of solution pending, of course, the sanction of the mighty experts. The

numerous dots of the Manipuris that at first seem so many meaningless things put down merely to waste the valuable time of the writer are in fact the most suggestive signs, as they imply so many stars. If they are the stars at all the O or the figure seven must necessarily be a group or groups of stars or constellation that look like the same. As the symbol in Hindi has some peculiar stroke that does not occur in both the Bengali and Manipuri ones it suggests that the constellation or constellations must contain a number of stars that would look like the same, but they are not so conspicuos as the rest that form the main figure, and thus they have been omitted as useless by those people. On the other hand the forefathers of both the Bengalis and Hindis thought it unnecessary to put down the superfluous dots as the symbol itself was quite suggestive for all practical purposes. But as time passed on the children of these three people or rather almost all the Hindus of India who did not look much to its material side have slakened to keep in memory the origin of its being used as the symbol of the Supreme Being. It may be stated here that in many of the manuscripts in Manipur the main figure of this symbol may be ranged from a regular figure seven to a peculiar figure that looks something intermediate between figure seven and an O of the Bengali alphabet, it must be remembered that

the main figure of this symbol does not occur in the Devanagari alphabet as a distinct letter, still it is represented by an almost similar figure, therefore the symbol must have been quite conventional, thus in the case of Bengali it is quite evident that the letter O was preceded by the symbol rather than the symbol by the letter. Thus if we take the three triangular stars with the Pole star in their midst and the Ursa Major we get a rough representation of this symbol, inasmuch as the four stars of the Polaris form the nad-bindu and the seven stars of the Ursa Major represent a rough figure seven that is some figure intermediate between a figure seven or the Bengali letter O. In fact these three stars of the Ursa Minor and the seven stars of the Ursa Major are those that are often alluded to in the Rgvedic literature as the three and seven cows or three and seven fire-woods or the like in order to show that they are maintaining the other four worlds they are often described as so many milch cows that give milk for their maintenance in the same way they are so many firewoods because they maintain the creation as firewood maintains the sacrificial fire.

The two overlapping triangles or the six petalled lotus in the centre of which ghata or the water jar representing God in the performance of various Pujas is placed are nothing but the three stars of this constellation indicating their revolution

round and round the Pole star. In fact they are the three legged seat of the Immortal Guru, the Uttanapada or the feet turned upwards, which is the root of the ficus religiosa referred to by Bhagavan Shree Krishna in the Bhagavdgeeta where the whole creation is compared with a sacred banian tree whose root lies in the topmost firmament and the branches such as the various worlds come downwards and the numerous shining bodies are as if so many leaves. In x-72-4 it is found that in this creation the earth was born of this Uttanapada or the feet turned upwards and it has been seen that according to the Manipuri account too the three legged seat of the Immortal Guru is the source of the earth. These three stars are the eternal feet in heaven as mentioned in i-22-15 of the Rgveda they are the three wheels the triangular chariot of the Aswins, the three knots or ties in which Agni is said to reside vide viii-39-9, the three feet of the Aswins mentioned in viii-8-23 or the three feet of Vishnu. They are the devayana or the vehicle of God of which some mention may be found in vii-76-2 or the Vaghadbhih or vehicles of Agni as mentioned in i-36-130. The iron tripod placed on the fireplace of the Manipuri household is nothing but a representation of these three stars and the three bits of iron that are put between the legs are to represent the perpetual revolution of these stars. In the Pouranic

accounts they have been personified as Uttanapada father of Dhruva, the little boy. The origin of this personification must have been derived from Rgveda I-146-1 where it is said that Agni resides on the topmost with three and seven rashmis or shining ones as if he is seated on the lap of his father. The position of these stars and Dhruva the Pole star would naturally strike the mind of anyone with the story of the child sitting on the lap of its father. They are the fish tail of the Shishumara or the porpoise in which the Pole star resides. Vide Vishnu Purana.

It has already been said that in Manipuri this symbol of Om or the pranava is called Anji but we have not accounted for it as yet, the meaning of the word is decoration. Another name of the Ursa Major in Manipuri is langyen taret or the seven decorations therefore at least to the ancient Manipuris they were known as decorations. In I-36-13 of the Rgveda Agni is worshipped with Anjis and Vaghats that is with his decorations and vehicles, here these seven stars are described as the decorations of Agni. However, this Ursa Major seems to have a great connection with Agni in the Rgveda vide 6-6-6 of the Rgveda and the version of it in Jogendra Nath Roy's Chaturvediya Purusa Sookta pages 62 to 63. The question which arises here is that why the symbol was named as Anji in Manipuri to the exclusion of the

name by which it was known in the mainland of India, we all know that the syllable Om is not to be uttered by the women folk and some other sects of the community but among the Manipuris it was a practice that at the time of learning the alphabet this mystic symbol has to be first written and uttered and in order to avoid the possible objection they have adopted the name which may imply the same thing but would have no objection from the more orthodox sects of the people. The facts that the dots of this symbol wherever they are used do not go over and above the nad-bindu is that none of the shining bodies are beyond the place occupied by the Supreme Being. In Manipuri the Immortal Guru is synonymous with Dhruva or the Pole star. In 6·15-7 we find that Dhruva is another name of Agni. In Sanskrita also dhruva means either truth or Pole star, it would appear that the name of Dhruva in the sense of the Pole star has come from the meaning of truth from the nature of the star, because to the lay man it is the only shining body that does not either set at any season of the year or does not seemingly change its position i. e. it is satya or eternal. It therefore follows that the Ursa Major and the four stars of the Polaris or the Ursa Minor constitute the symbol of Om or Pranava.

In many of the Aryan languages the constellation of the Charles's wain has to do with the

bear as their names such as riksha, the Greater Bear, Ursa Major and the like indicate. Max Muller's remarks on this subject are as follows, "Now, remember, that the constellation here called the Rikshas in the sense of the bright ones, would be synonymous in Sanskrit with the bears. Remember also, that, apparently without rhyme or reason, the same constellation is called by the Greeks and Romans the Bear, in singular, arktos and ursa. There may be some similarity between that constellation and a waggon or wain, but there is not a shadow of a likeness to a bear. You will now perceive the influence of words on thought, or the spontaneous growth of mythology. The name riksha was applied to the bear in the sense of the bright furious animal, and in that sense it became most popular in the later Sanskrit and in Greek and Latin. The same name, in the sense of the bright ones, had been applied by the vedic poets to the stars in general and more particularly to that constellation which, in the northern parts of India, was the most prominent. The etymological meaning of riksha, as simply the bright stars, was forgotten, the popular meaning of riksha, bear, was known to every body. And thus it happened that when the Greeks had left their central home and settled in Europe, they retained the name of Arktos for the same unchanging stars, but not knowing why these stars had originally received that name, they

spoke of them as arktoi, or many bears, and spoke of them as the Bear, the Great Bear, adding a bearward, the arcturus (ourus, ward) and in time even a little Bear. Thus the name of Arctic regions rests on misunderstanding of a name framed thousands of years ago in Central Asia ; and the surprise with which many a thoughtful observer has looked at these seven bright stars, wondering why they were ever called the Bear, is removed by a reference to the early annals of human speech.

On the other hand, the Hindus also forgot the original meaning of riksha. It became a mere name, apparently with two meanings, star and bear. In India however the meaning of bear predominated and as riksha became more and more the established name of the animal, it lost in the same degree its connection with the stars. So when in the later times, their Seven Sages had become familiar to all under the name of the Seven Rishis, the Seven Rikshas, being unattatched, gradually drifted towards the Seven Rishis, and many a fable sprang up as to the Seven poets dwelling in the seven stars. Such is the origin of myth". But one of the most striking thing that would never fail to attract the attention of an orientalist is the Manipuri name of the bear, in this language it is called a Sa-om, the etymological meaning of which is a beast forming Om, and is a very peculiar name too. As every name that is

given is the summing up of all attainable knowledge concerning a thing, it contains within itself the answer which man attempts to make to that ever recurring question why? If we try with this ever recurring question of why as to the origin of the name of this word we shall find that the animal had something to do with the symbol of Om. The Manipuri name of the bear is quite opposite to the method adopted in the other languages mentioned above in as much as it is the translation of the idea of the former and thus more directly explains the original idea. Because it will be observed that the name of the beast was preceded by the words beast and Om and when people were at a loss as to what name they should give to the new animal they must have summed up all the attainable knowledge concerning it, they must have thought of a beast of which he is one and of Om or a mere translation of the mere idea that was already existing. In Manipuri this is not the individual word that explains the old Hindu idea, the most striking ones of this nature are some of the names of the days of the week, such as the earth's son is the literal translation of the Manipuri name for Tuesday, the keeper of the horse is that for Thursday, the lord of blood is that for Friday and a blacksmith is Saturday. If we think of the Hindu accounts of these planets that represent the names

of these days of the week the real signification of the Manipuri names will be realized and see that people in summing up of all the attainable knowledge concerning them had given all the possible thought of the Hindu idea of those planets. However it must be admitted that to many of the ancient observers the two constellations of the Ursa Major and the Ursa Minor were at least some sort of animal. According to the Hindu idea the Ursa Major is a porpoise in whose tail the Pole star exists among the western countries it is the Little Bear on the other hand from Max Muller's notes we can see that the Karens call the Great Bear the elephant. The Pole star is a mouse crawling into the elephant's trunk. With the Manipuris its name is not very obvious but there are grounds to say that with them also the Little Bear was also some sort of animal because we have already said that the iron tripod placed on the household fire represents the three stars of this constellation and the Manipuri name for this means an iron dame of beast, i.e.—something made of iron that represents the old beast.

In vii-101-1 of the Rgveda some hints of the sound, the nature of Om are given, where it is said that it is a combination of three sounds and milks rain producing clouds. Therefore it must be the thundering of the clouds and at the same time as it generally follows the flash of light which is Agni itself to the early thinker it must have been

taken as the voice of Agni i. e. that of the Supreme Being and it is propetious because it gives rain which is so useful to all. In this connection it may be asked why this symbol has been pronounced as such to the exclusion of any other in order to represent God. Let me here give the Manipuri notion of its origin. In archaic Manipuri literature it is said that God's image is his voice, although it may speak volumes by itself, yet it may naturally be asked what is this voice of God. It is said that his voice is something like the eternal sound of one syllable that we feel to hear when we shut up our ears with the fingures. This sound is nothing but an indistinctly sounded Om. It is interesting to note here that a parallel statement may be noticed in the Maitryupanishad in page 106.

The derivative meaning of the word Om may be examined here in order to understand the meaning of the word fully we know that our old forefathers have not deprived us of their vast knowledge and they have defined it as avanadomiti smrita, that is it is derived from root av to protect or in other words that which protects all is Om. Therefore this symbol of Om is protecting the whole universe or in other words is sustaining it. We have already seen that Agni is sustaining the whole universe therefore this mystic symbol is nothing but a representation of Agni or Vishnu.

CHAPTER IV

A God with Three Feet

In the Rgveda the three feet of Vishnu is very well known just as the three feet of Bamana in the Pouranic accounts. In viii-8-23 we read that the Aswins too have got three feet. In the famous Purusa sookta too although the person is described as having four feet one of which is in this earth and the other three in heaven yet his three feet are far more prominent than the other one as he is said to be moving with these three feet being accompanied by the whole universe, vide x-90-3. This is a repetition of the idea conveyed in i-22-16 wherein it is said that let all the gods protect us wherefrom Vishnu is stepping with all the worlds commencing from this earth or in other words let all the gods who may be in the space where Vishnu is stepping with the seven worlds including this earth protect us, thus we see that Vishnu's stepping is nothing but his motion with his three feet accomapanied by the whole universe or the seven expansions. But how does he step ? — a solution of it may be found in i-22 where it is said that this protector invincible Vishnu is stepping with his three feet by which he is holding all the Dharmas, he is protecting or because he is keeping or sustaining everything in tact and invincible because his action cannot be stopped in any

way that is to say that he is sustaining the whole universe and no one can violate it although he is carrying on the work for days, months and years, but why does he step in this fashion ? — the answer is to hold all the Dharmas, but what is Dharmas ? —the word is very vague, in the modern lexicography it has got too numerous meanings to be dealt with, let us therefore select one of the simplest ways of finding out the oldest meaning and as the Rgveda is the earliest known literature of the Hindus and several thousands of years have lapsed since its compilation, it must be expected that the most simple and primitive meaning of the word must have been used in this treatise and as the derivative meaning of a word is the most primitive and simplest one let us see what this meaning would imply, it is derived from the root dhri to hold and means that which is to be held, therefore the most faithful and thus the simplest meaning of the passage would be therefrom Vishnu is holding all that he has to hold, in other words he in his stepping with his three feet holds the whole universe that he has to hold. It is very satisfactory to note here that our meaning of the word dharma is also supported by Sayana e. g. in I-159-3 we find that he has given the meaning of ধর্ম্মণি as ধরণে, রক্ষণে to hold to protect. In i-22 we get some further information of these three feet of Vishnu, they are qualified by the

adjective Parama i. e. superior and conveys the meaning of having at least another non-superior foot contemplating the fourth foot of Purusa or the Person which is on the earth in the famous Purusa Sookta. These three feet of Vishnu are the ones turned upwards referred to above. From x-72-3 and the subsequent verse it will be seen that in the creation as soon as something was created from nothing, these turned up feet were the next that are mentioned and from these directions were created that is as soon as the three stars of the Polaris was created it was possible to discern the directions, which are again said to have been born from the earth, here too the reason is quite evident.

This stepping of Vishnu with his three feet and the whole universe signifies that the Rgvedic Rishis were acquainted with the astronomical fact of the motion of the heavenly bodies and the truth that in this creation whether animate or inanimate nothing is at rest. Vishnu is the cause of this motion and thus the manifestation of the Supreme Being with this attribute was known as Vishnu to the ancient Hindu. Now let us try to understand how and why to such a manifestation the name Vishnu has been given or in other words what were the summing up of all the attainable knowledge concerning Vishnu at the time of giving him this name, if we can make some progress in this direction it may be hoped that we shall be able

at least to some extent to fathom the intellectual attainment of the people of those earliest days of the Aryan civilization. Etymologists derive the word Vishnu from two different roots viz. vish to enter or vaish to consume, both of these derivations contain within themselves the answer of the ever recurring question why ? Now the derivative meaning of the word therefore may be interpreted as to which or whom everything enters on whom consumes or destroys everything in this creation. Now let us try to solve the propriety of the name of putting the ever recurring question of why ? It reminds us of the law of centripetal and centrifugal forces, as we know according to this law everything ultimately enters to the body which is the cause of such a force i. e. to the cause of the centre of gravity, here as Vishnu is the centre of gravity round which the whole universe that is to say all the heavenly bodies making also the planets with all their satellites and so on are apparently turning round and round Vishnu as if it were the nave of the series of wheels of the heavenly bodies, thus according to the laws of Physical Science when the power of the force will be exhausted everything will have to enter into it. When the people observed that the whole universe was revolving round and round something and knew that according to some inviolable laws everything will ultimately

fall into him. They gave him the name of Vishnu, and as all the deities or devas are personified object the wonder of nature which had such a faculty was this god Vishnu, the sense of the first derivative meaning It is also a known fact that the exhaustion of the power of centrifugal force is an end of the whole system which at that stage by falling into the source of the power will be immerged into it, in other words they will be destroyed or devoured by it, this fact was popularly known as the eating up everything by Vishnu and this was the cause of the name in the second derivative meaning. This conception of Vishnu is fully illustrated in the 29th verses 11th chapter of the Bhagavadgeeta.

In realization of this universal truth we circumambulate our God or his representative and bow down or fall down at his feet, the ultimate aim of which is that as we are revolving round and round him we shall some day or other have to fall down into him. In the circumambulation of God we take four rounds because according to the Hindu Idea the destruction of each creation is at the lapse of the four ages viz. Satya, Treta, Dwapura, and Kali and thus each round is an emblem of each of the four ages.

Gopaldeva or the baby god in the posture of moving on all fours with one of his lifted hands holding a round sweetmeat reminds us of

the Immortal Guru, or Vishnu with the tripod seat or his three feet. His lifted hand with the sweetmeat is the emblematic representation of holding the universe while the posture of his being supported by his two legs and one hand is the representation of the tripod seat or the three feet of Vishnu.

In the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata we notice a thousand names of Vishnu. Let us here examine some of the names and then close this enquiry into the Pole star and Vishnu. In the Rgveda the qualifying words of the Purusha or Person in the Purusa Sookta are thousand headed, thousand eyed and thousand footed; these are all the names of Vishnu in the Mahabharata and even the very word Purusa is also one of his names. Therefore according to the Mahabharata Vishnu and the Person or the Supreme Being are identical. Nakshatranemi is another name of Vishnu, as Nakshatra means a star and nemi a wheel it means that he is moving by means of the heavenly bodies, on the other hand as the Pole star is placed as if it were the nave of all the heavenly bodies their work is the same. Chakri or one who holds the wheel, another name of Vishnu, carries the same idea. In the Vishnusahasranama Guru is another name of Vishnu, the Manipuri name of Guru Shidaba or the Immortal Guru for the Pole star as well as the Supreme Being then signifies the same

Vishnu. In fine it may not be out of place to note here that in olden days Vishnu was a very popular deity in Manipur, the little Sacred Stone of Vishnu that accompanies the Maharajas wherever they go out and is the most important royal insignia is at least of the 15th century A. D. In the national game of Boat race Vishnu used to take an important part and this practice is said to have been in vogue from the early 17th century. The metal image of Vishnu at Khurai Lairkyengbam Leikai is as old as the early 17th century. This image was given to one of the courtiers of the family by Maharaja Khagemba. Besides this there are numerous instances to prove that in earlier days Manipur used to worship the vedic god Indra under the name of Soraren a phonetic decay of Surendra, as their rain giver.



THE END